

## Cell Phones and Reducing Health Disparities

DRA Project Report 06-02

With the wide use of cellular phones, penetrating even the poorest populations in the United States, consideration of how cell phones can be utilized to decrease disparities in health is warranted. Health applications are already available on cell phones for recording and reinforcing nutrition, testing glucose and managing diabetes. It is expected that with the upcoming development of WiMax technologies, enabling low cost internet access through cellular phones, the role of cell phones in health monitoring will greatly expand.

### **Possible health applications of cell phones**

- Provide early warning of disease
- Provide real time monitoring of conditions, reinforcing effective treatment
- Reinforce healthier behavior in culturally appropriate ways
- Facilitate communication of health status between patients and their care providers

### **Ensuring cell phones play a role in reducing rather than increasing disparities**

There is a need to monitor and forecast developments in this area to understand the possibilities and where a disparity reducing perspective can be introduced. This includes paying special attention to:

- Disparity reduction in equipment and system design, infrastructure and service package development for self care and managing diseases, particularly for high disparity diseases
- Health detracting effects of potential advertising trends – as food tobacco and other advertising currently challenge health
- Encouragement of health tests/applications using cell phones and related technologies among poor and underserved populations
- Ensuring that the poor have up to date services and infrastructure to maximize health benefits and reduce disparities among the high disparity diseases

### **Next Steps:**

**A range of scenarios and an agenda of key disparity reducing opportunities need to be developed by the DRA project and its partners to promote cell phones as a health disparity reducing technology. The objective will be to anticipate juncture points and key decisions that will affect the emergence of biomonitoring and health record developments, with the goal of equitable access and reduction of health disparities among the highest disparity diseases.**

Review the full report at: [http://www.altfutures.com/DRA/Cell\\_Phones\\_and\\_Health\\_Disparities.pdf](http://www.altfutures.com/DRA/Cell_Phones_and_Health_Disparities.pdf).  
For more information on the DRA Project, visit our website at [www.altfutures.com/draproject](http://www.altfutures.com/draproject) .

*"The challenge is not only to anticipate the future, but to create it."*

The DRA Project - Institute for Alternative Futures

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